



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/840,640	04/24/2001	Russell L. Kress	KRESS-305	3978

.7590 04/21/2004  
Mr. Edward J. Timmer  
Walnut Woods Centre  
5955 W. Main Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

EXAMINER

VARNER, STEVE M

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3635

DATE MAILED: 04/21/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

## Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/840,640

Applicant(s)

KRESS, RUSSELL L.

Examiner

Steve M Varner

Art Unit

3635

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on \_\_\_\_.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-32 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,2,6-8,11-23 and 26-32 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 3-5,9,10,24 and 25 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

- ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. \_\_\_\_.
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_.

## DETAILED ACTION

### *Double Patenting*

The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

Claims 1, 2, 12-23, 26-28, are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1, 2, 4, 7, 9-14, 17, 18, of U.S. Patent No. 6543191. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because.

Regarding claim 1, Kress '191 claims 1, 7, 9, teach a stairway, comprising a pair of laterally spaced apart elongated stringers and a plurality of integral riser surfaces and integral tread surfaces extending between said stringers to form steps, said riser surfaces and tread surfaces being formed as one-piece of synthetic resin. Synthetic resin is held to be plastic.

Regarding claim 2, Kress '191 claim 1 teaches the stairway including a plurality of individual preformed tread members fastened on the tread surfaces.

Regarding claim 12, Kress '191 claim 9 teaches the stairway wherein said plastic material comprises one or more outer filled resin layers and one more inner fiber reinforced filled resin layers applied on the outer filler resin layers.

Regarding claim 13, Kress '191 claim 10 teaches the stairway wherein said one or more outer filled resin layers each comprises a synthetic resin and mineral particles and said one or more inner fiber reinforced resin layers each comprises resin, mineral particles and chopped fibers.

Regarding claim 14, Kress '191 claim 3 teaches wherein said tread surfaces are configured to include an integral reinforcement.

Regarding claim 15, Kress '191 claim 4 teaches the integral reinforcement comprises a rib extending along a length of each tread surface and having concave cross-sectional configuration residing below plane defined by said tread surface.

Regarding claim 16, Kress '191 claim 11 teaches a preformed tread members comprise an outer ceramic filled gelcoat layer and a fiber reinforced filled resin layer under said gelcoat layer.

Regarding claim 17, Kress '191 claim 12 teaches the stairway wherein said preformed tread members include an integral bull nose that depends downwardly to overlap the adjacent riser surface located therebelow.

Regarding claim 18, Kress '191 claim 18 teaches the stairway wherein said preformed tread members include a plurality of fasteners and said tread surface includes a plurality of holes to receive a respective fastener.

Regarding claim 19, Kress '191 claim 13 teaches a lower surface of each said

preformed tread member includes plurality of pilot protrusions that are received in a respective one of said holes said underlying tread surface.

Regarding claim 20, Kress '191 claim 14 teaches the fasteners include an enlarged fastener head captured in each tread member and a threaded shank received in a respective hole of said tread surface.

Regarding claim 21, Kress '191 claim 17 teaches the fasteners each include an enlarged fastener head captured said landing member and threaded shank received in a respective hole of said landing surface.

Regarding claim 22, Kress '191 claim 1, 7, 9, a stairway comprising a pair of laterally spaced apart elongated stringers and a plurality of integral riser surfaces and integral tread surfaces extending between said the stringers so as form steps, said stringers, riser surfaces and tread surfaces being formed as one-piece of plastic material.

Regarding claim 23, Kress '191 claim 1 teaches a plurality of individual preformed tread members fastened on the tread surfaces.

Regarding method claims 26-28, the claimed methods are the obvious methods of making a stairway with Kress '191's modified prefabricated stairway and method.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Refer to Fig. 6 attached.

Claims 1, 6-8, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Schmidt.

Regarding claim 1, Schmidt shows a pair of laterally spaced apart elongated stringers (A) and a plurality of integral riser surfaces (16) and integral tread surfaces (18) extending between said stringers to form steps, said riser surfaces and tread surfaces being formed as one-piece of plastic (Col. 4, Line 35-45) (Abstract) (Fig. 6).

Regarding claim 6, Schmidt shows each stringer includes a first upstanding wall (B) and a laterally extending wall (C) (Fig. 6).

Regarding claim 7, Schmidt shows the laterally extending wall includes receptacles (D) formed integrally therein (Fig. 6).

Regarding claim 8, Schmidt shows a second upstanding wall (E) extending upwardly from the laterally extending wall (Fig. 6).

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claim 29-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Birch et al.

Regarding claim 29, Birch et al. shows a stairway having a plurality of treads made of a material selected from the group consisting of wood, metal, concrete (Col. 1, Line 30-35) and at least one preformed tread member (14) comprising plastic material (Col. 6, Line 40) fastened on at least one tread (Fig. 3).

Regarding claim 30, Birch et al. shows tread member has a color that is different from the steps.

Regarding claim 31, the tread member is fastened on a worn or damaged tread of said stairway (Fig. 3).

Regarding claim 32, the claimed method is the obvious method of repairing Birch et al.'s heating method and assembly for staircase.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schmidt.

Regarding claim 11, Schmidt shows the basic claimed structure. Schmidt does not show a reinforcing gusset is disposed between the first upstanding wall and the laterally extending wall. It would have been an obvious design choice to use a gusset for support of the laterally extending wall from the first upstanding wall.

### ***Claim Objections***

Claims 3-5, 9-10, 24-25, are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Lyons reveals a prefabricated stair. Hayman et al. reveals a scaffold stair. Rinke shows an insertable swimming pool step assembly. Howard shows reinforced fiberglass steps.

### ***Conclusion***

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Steve M Varner whose telephone number is 703 308-1894. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 7:30-4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Carl D Friedman can be reached on 703 308-0839. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



Application/Control Number: 09/840,640

Page 8

Art Unit: 3635

SV

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized 'S' or 'SV' followed by a flourish.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Carl D. Friedman' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Carl D. Friedman  
Supervisory Patent Examiner  
Group 3600